



MINUTE FOR MISSION

October 15, 2007

A fireplace from which a flame can burst forth (Czech Republic)

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Professor Trojan (right) has a new book that lifts up the important role played by small groups of Christians during the communist era.

Throughout the country, pastors and educators alike took the risk of hosting groups of political and “spiritual” dissidents who dared to look at biblical texts, theological issues, and philosophical theories without the optimism that comfortable piety may invite. These groups supported the participants with a rare blend of compassion and challenge, facilitated the covert preparation



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and distribution of typewritten copies of books from the West that had been banned by communist authorities, and took up a number of difficult issues. From Brno, where a survivor of Nazi concentration camps hosted groups focused on human rights, to villages where pastors opened their doors to people who wanted to explore and preserve a faithful way of living under the communist regime, to a warehouse in Prague where similar gatherings were held—in all of these and many other places, small groups persisted in spite of surveillance, loss of licenses to preach and teach, or expulsion. Thus, thirty years ago, a number of participants in these groups coalesced to present the government of Czechoslovakia with an unprecedented challenge: they signed a document called Charter 77 that demanded that authorities abide by their promise to uphold human rights in terms of the Helsinki Accord. As those small groups ventured a colossal risk together, the drive for liberation that had been growing privately but persistently for a number of years was enhanced. Now Professor Trojan and other people of faith are free to develop the insights that emerged in their small groups in ways that may give life to Trojan's assertion that "the Christian faith is not cold ashes, but a fireplace from which a flame can burst forth once more."

PRAYER: Let us not forget people of courage, O Lord. When times are easy, may their examples prod us; when times are hard, may their perseverance encourage us; above all, may the wisdom that they have gleaned from their experiences find clear expression, so that Jesus' story can remain a living source of hope and liberation. Amen.

The Rev. Joyce Mahler Michael
PC(USA) Mission Worker
Praha, Czech Republic

Do you have a mission story to tell? Would you like to read inspiring stories of Presbyterians in mission? Visit the Witness Season Web site: www.pcusa.org/witness. New minutes for mission are posted on the 1st and 15th of each month.

For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

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